



Jan. 6, 2012

Looking back at 2011, the ferry system has made remarkable progress in a number of important areas. While we have much more that needs to be accomplished, I would like to pause for a moment and reflect on what we have accomplished together this year. I also want to thank and congratulate our customers, employees and communities for their part in making this past year extraordinary. Below are some highlights of key accomplishments from the past year.

- Celebrating 60 years of service.** June marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state ferry system. Our success would not be possible without the dedication, experience and skill of our employees. I want to thank every employee and customer who has sailed with us for the past six decades. You have helped us carry on a proud and distinguished maritime service. We got a chance to celebrate this milestone in many ways this past year, from employees voting on a commemorative logo, to launching [Ferry Gear](#) merchandise, to cutting cake at community meetings, to cheering on the Seattle Mariners at an August home game. Look for a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary magazine coming soon to our vessels and terminals.
- New vessels in the water and under construction.** Today in Port Townsend, we are welcoming the new ferry Kennewick to the fleet and celebrating completion of the [64-car Kwa-di Tabil Class](#). The three-vessel program – Chetzemoka, Salish and Kennewick – was completed three months early and \$6.7 million under budget. Additionally, construction is under way on the first [144-car ferry](#) at Vigor Industrial. Work on this first 144-car vessel will create an estimated 200 family-wage jobs at Vigor and 350 jobs at subcontractors, vendors and other shipyards in the region.
- Our numbers speak for themselves.** In 2011, ridership was up approximately one percent with three straight quarters of modest growth. There were 159,701 sailings completed during the year, with 96.7 percent completed on time. In fact, each month we post our [on-time performance](#) for all routes. We carry more vehicles than any other ferry system in the world (more than 10 million per year) and we're near the top in the world for number of passengers carried (more than 22 million per year).
- Customer complaints down.** Customer complaints dropped by 50 percent this past year. I really appreciate the dedication of our employees to provide excellent customer service. With your help, let's see if we can get the *compliments* to double next year!
- New online customer service tools.** As part of our marketing efforts in 2011, we were busy making improvements to our online resources. We redesigned the home page of our website, making it easier for customers to find critical information. We added two important trip planning tools. On the right side of each route's [schedule page](#), there is a chart called *Best Travel Times* that highlights the best time to catch a ferry so vehicle customers can avoid the busiest times. We also added [estimated time of arrival](#) (ETA) for vessels throughout the system on the [VesselWatch page](#), so customers can better predict the arrival of their desired ferry.
- Visual paging pilot a success.** In April, WSF launched a six-month pilot project on the Bainbridge/Seattle route to allow our hard-of-hearing or deaf customers to access critical traveler information by way of video screens on the Tacoma and Wenatchee ferries and in the Bainbridge and Colman dock terminals. Given the success of the pilot, I gave the direction to build out the

visual paging system as soon as feasible both financially and technically. We are well on our way to providing this essential service to our deaf and hearing-impaired customers on a much larger scale.

- **Terminal preservation program.** There were twenty-five contracts completed for much needed terminal construction, ranging from [seismic retrofit of the bridge seat at the Anacortes Terminal](#) to preserving the [Mukilteo Terminal transfer span](#).
- **Moving forward with LNG.** WSF has received conceptual approval from the U.S. Coast Guard to retrofit the propulsion system with new engines on the six Issaquah Class vessels and re-design the new 144-car ferry to accommodate using liquefied natural gas (LNG) as fuel. LNG is an exciting possibility for the ferry system that would mean cleaner emissions and reduced expenditures on fuel.
- **Connecting Washington Task Force recommendation.** The governor established a [Connecting Washington Task Force](#) to develop a sustainable 10-year funding package for transportation. The Task Force reached a consensus to recommend to the governor and the Legislature a comprehensive transportation package totaling approximately \$20 billion over the next 10 years. Their recommendation is that this revenue be raised by a combination of state fees, tolling, taxes and increased local option revenues. They also recommended that the Legislature should directly increase revenues sufficient to preserve and maintain the current transportation system and that improvements to the system should be put to a vote in fall 2012. Currently, the ferry operating and capital shortfall over the next 10 years (\$1.3 billion) is included in the preservation and maintenance category. I greatly appreciated the ferry communities and customers who participated in this process by attending the meetings and providing comments.

Thank you for your part in making the Washington state ferry system great! I am already looking forward to what the new year will bring. I will discuss the goals and vision for 2012 in my weekly report on Jan. 20.

David Moseley's weekly updates are available on the WSDOT Ferries Division website at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/weekly](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/weekly).

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